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AIRTEL, ELON MUSK'S SPACEX JOIN HANDS FOR SATCOM SERVICE
Bharti Airtel on Tuesday said it signed an agreement with Musk's SpaceX to offer high-speed internet services under Starlink to its customers in India

AIRTEL GAINS HEFT VERSUS RIVAL EUTELSAT
The development assumes significance as Sunil Mittal-led Bharti Airtel was at loggerheads with Starlink over licence fees and spectrum pricing for satellite-based internet service providers. Airtel is also the single-largest shareholder with a 21.2% share in Starlink's rival firm Eutelsat OneWeb, which has got the nod to start operations in India

DEAL SET TO BENEFIT BOTH COMPANIES
■ The agreement will enable Airtel and SpaceX to explore how Starlink could complement and expand Airtel's offerings
■ Airtel said that its agreement with SpaceX is subject to receiving authorisations to sell Starlink's satellite communications-based services in India. The deal will be symbiotic in nature | P13

80%
OF ADJUSTED GROSS REVENUE IS WHAT TELECOMS ARE CHARGED AS LICENCE FEE

MORNING MADNESS

- 1 Attackers blew up railway tracks between Peshawar and Gadadar in Sibi district of Balochistan in Pakistan
- 2 Armed men stormed the train, taking over 100 passengers, including security men, women and kids, hostage
- 3 Security forces have launched an operation to rescue the hostages, with local media reporting a fire exchange late in the night



Balochistan Liberation Army said it seized control of the train when it minutes away from the Mashkaf tunnel on the Peshawar-Kunri route in Sibi district

ILLUSTRATION: SOURAV ROY

THE TAKING OF JAFFAR EXP

PAK TRAIN HOSTAGE DRAMA WITH 500 ABOARD

QUETTA: Suspected Baloch insurgents opened fire at a passenger train in Pakistan's restive Balochistan region on Tuesday and shot dead 20 soldiers while taking hundreds of passengers, including women and children, hostages.

Pakistan media reported late Tuesday that 80 hostages had been rescued and 13 terrorists eliminated after an operation by special forces. There were still close to 400 hostages on the train.

The insurgents bombed the track before storming the Jaffar Express, headed from Quetta to Peshawar, between Peshawar and Gadadar stations in a remote, mountainous area of Sibi district in Balochistan province which borders Afghanistan and Iran.

Government spokesperson Shahid Rind termed it as a "terrorist attack." The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) took over the train, and warned "all hostages would be executed" if Pakistan army intervened. BLA, banned in Pakistan, the UK and the US, is fighting for independence and accuses outsiders of profiting from the region's vast mineral wealth. Controller of Railways Muhammad Kashif said that the train, comprising nine coaches, has around 500 passengers on board. There are 17 tunnels in the area on the railway line and due to the difficult terrain, trains move at a slow speed, Kashif said. The train was ambushed near Mashkaf tunnel in Sibi district.

Dawn.com said security forces

had surrounded the area and launched a clearance operation that would continue till the aggressors were eliminated.

An emergency has been declared at local hospitals, and rescue teams are on their way to the site. However, the rocky terrain is making it difficult for officials to reach the area. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi condemned the attack, and said: "The beasts who fire on innocent passengers do not deserve any concessions."

The siege comes amid a surge in terror attacks in Balochistan, with over 1,600 people killed in attacks in 2024. In November 2024, at least 26 people were killed in a suicide blast at Quetta railway station. AP/AFP



Ministry lifts suspension, WFI calls trials

FIROZ MIRZA @Chennai

MONTHS of uncertainty gave way to hope as the sports ministry through an order dated March 10 revoked suspension of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI). The suspension was imposed on December 24, 2023, days after the elections of the executive committee following which Sanjay Kumar Singh was elected as the president.

The sports ministry after much deliberation and evaluation took this decision in the interest of the wrestlers. There was ambiguity over selection and participation in international competitions was also getting affected. The development meant the Indian wrestlers, who had to miss two Ranking Series last month, could now compete at the Asian Championships this month. Had they missed this, they would have been rendered ineligible to compete at World Championships.

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said decision was taken keeping in mind the welfare of wrestlers. WFI chief thanked the PM, home minister and sports minister for lifting suspension. Due to the suspension and an order of the single bench of the Delhi HC, WFI was not able to hold selection trials. WFI is planning to hold trials on March 15. Hours after the suspension was revoked, Delhi HC division bench disposed off an appeal challenging single bench order over IOA's ad hoc committee.

P15

Uproar in House over salary to Congress workers

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE Assembly witnessed pandemonium on Tuesday when MLAs from the Opposition demanded that the Congress abolish the panels overseeing implementation of its five

guarantee schemes. The Opposition did not relent despite CM Siddaramaiah's intervention.

Raising the issue, Turuvekere MLA MT Krishnappa (JDS) said the government paid salary to Congress workers, who have been made members of the panels at district and

GUARANTEE PANELS

taluk levels. Taxpayers' money is being wasted on members of these panels, he alleged.

BJP and JDS legislators supported him and demanded that the government abolish these panels. This led to a heated de-

bate, forcing Speaker UT Khader to adjourn the House. Pandemonium continued when the session resumed. Khader, who adjourned the House again, held a reconciliatory meeting with the CM, DyCM DK Shivakumar, LoP R Ashoka, and JD-SLP leader CB Sureshababu. P4

Now, regn must for homestays in Hampi

KIRAN BALANNAVAR @Hosapete

THE World Heritage Site of Hampi and its surrounding areas in Vijayanagara district have over 117 unregistered homestays. This has raised concerns over the safety of tourists, especially foreigners, renting them. According to the Karnataka Tourism Act, registration and approval from the district tourism department are mandatory for homestays. However, many homestay owners have not registered their facilities.

'Take steps for safe tourism'

In the backdrop of the gangrape and murder near Hampi, the home department has issued a circular to police commissioners and SPs across the state to ensure tourists' safety P7

authorities are blamed. This has become a big challenge for them. Vijayanagar SP Shrihari Babu BL said many homestays in and around Hampi are operating without any permission.

CONTINUED ON P7

OVER 100 VACANCIES PLANNED FOR TAKA POLICE DEPT: P7

Gaurav Gupta to probe DGP Rao's role in gold smuggling case

EXPRESS NEWS BUREAU @Bengaluru

THE state government on Monday appointed a senior IAS officer to probe the alleged role of Dr K Ramachandra Rao, director general of police (DGP) and managing director of Karnataka State Police Housing and Infrastructure Development Corporation, in the gold smuggling case in which his stepdaughter Ranya Rao, 33, was arrested a few days ago.

Following allegations of Ranya exploiting the privileges granted to Rao, IPS officer of Karnataka cadre, to bypass security checks at airports, the state government appointed Gaurav Gupta, additional chief secretary, to probe the misuse of protocol privileges and the alleged role of Rao in the case.

Gupta has been directed to commence his investigation immediately and submit a report within a week. P4

NEW IMMIGRATION LAW HAS MORE TEETH, TABLED IN LOK SABHA

Provisions to deny foreigners' entry, restrict their movement; harsh penalty for violators

MUKESH RANJAN @New Delhi

THE government on Tuesday introduced the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 in the Lok Sabha, seeking to overhaul existing immigration laws and streamline various services related to foreigners' entry, exit, and stay in the country.

Introducing the bill on the behalf of Home Minister Amit Shah, MoS Nityanand Rai said that once the proposed law is passed, it will replace the colonial-era Foreigners Act, 1946; Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920; Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939; and the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000.

According to the bill, the objective is to enhance national security, control immigration procedures, and introduce stricter penalties on foreigners who violate visa rules. It says any foreigner posing a threat to national security, sovereignty or the integrity of the nation "will not be allowed into the country or will be denied the permission to stay in India".

It further mandates registration for foreigners upon arrival. The bill proposes heavy penalties for violations. Those overstaying, violating norms, or trespassing in restricted areas face three years imprisonment and fine of up to ₹5 lakh.

Transport carriers carrying foreigners without valid documents face up to ₹5 lakh fine. If a foreigner is denied entry, the carrier will be responsible for

1 KEY PROVISIONS

- Mandatory registration of foreigners upon arrival; restrictions on their movement, name change, and stay in protected/restricted areas
- Mandatory for universities, hospitals and accommodation providers to report about foreign nationals
- Burden of proof on individuals to establish they are not foreigners
- International transport carriers must provide passenger data

2 PUNITIVE CHARGES

- Entry without valid documents: Up to 5 yrs in prison or ₹5 lakh fine
- Use of forged documents: 2-7 years in jail or ₹1-10 lakh fine
- Overstaying Visa: Up to 3 years in jail or ₹3 lakh fine

3 ENFORCEMENT POWERS

- Immigration officers empowered to arrest without warrant
- Authorities can remove foreigners violating the law
- No appeal provision in proposed law

their removal from India. The bill empowers immigration officers to arrest individuals without a warrant. Meanwhile, the opposition dubbed the bill as violative of constitutional provisions. Congress MP Manish Tiwari said it doesn't even have the right to appeal.

Sanjeev Kapoor Says...
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Make sure to check the BIS quality mark.
Scan here to view The video message



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